



Fairfax County History Commission

10360 North Street
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-2514
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January 23, 2010

Sharon Bulova
Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Dear Chairman Bulova:

At its January 2010 meeting, the History Commission voted to make the following comments to the Board of Supervisors on the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Master Plan.

Recognizing that the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse area is within a Historic District listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, special care should be taken to minimize significant changes that compromise its historic fabric and spaces. Although the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Master Plan is a concept plan there are certain issues of concern, specifically:

The Ball Field—Changing the use of the ball field to a common green should be reconsidered because it undervalues the historic and cultural significance of the ball field to the community. In addition to racially mixed baseball games between prisoners and local teams, performances on the ball field by nationally and internationally known celebrities, many of whom were African American before racially mixed audiences, have significance in the context of the Civil Rights Movement. At a minimum, the area should be retained as open space with interpretive signage.

The Wall—The entire wall is a contributing feature to the National Register Historic District and the north wall, as viewed from Silverbrook Road, is iconic and integral to the identity of the prison. Therefore, it should remain intact with minimal breach for access. Additionally, the retail pad site blocks the view of the wall and detracts from the viewshed. A restaurant at this location would trivialize the image of the wall. The south wall should remain in its entirety including the control center, with the exception of very carefully considered access.

Demolition of Contributing Structures—The six structures proposed for destruction should be carefully considered and only demolished if not reasonable alternative exists. Tower #8, although not marked for demolition in the area of the ball field, is not shown on the plan and should be retained.

Parking—The amount of parking within the penitentiary walls is excessive and should be reconsidered. Generally, the proposed amount, type and location of parking throughout the site

should be reconsidered. Parking does not appear well integrated into the site, appears remote in relationship to the use it is proposed to serve and surface parking seems excessive.

Residential and Retail—Retail currently slated for the penitentiary area should be reconsidered and moved to a more central location within the center of the site such as recommended in the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Advisory Committee Recommendations of November 2004. Those historic buildings located at the center should be used for retail not housing consistent with the advisory committee recommendations.

The Fairfax County History Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors take these comments, which reflect preserving the history of Fairfax County, into consideration when reviewing the proposed Revised Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Site Master Plan because as written it will cause significant changes that will compromise the historic fabric and spaces of the site as discussed above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie Robinson".

Chairman
Fairfax County History Commission

cc: via email
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Anthony Griffin, County Executive
Jim Zook, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
Chris Caperton, Department of Planning & Zoning
Linda Blank, Preservation Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning